Creating Performance Entries

The performance category can be one of the most exciting ways to participate in History Day, since it is the only category in which students present their research live. Entries in this category must have dramatic appeal, but not at the expense of historical information. Creativity is the key here, and students must make effective use of their 10-minute time allowance.

Here are some suggestions for students who are preparing performances:

- Choose a theme-related topic that has personal interest and that will work particularly well as a performance.
- Decide whether the chosen topic will be most effective as a group or as an individual performance.
- Research the topic first. Write important facts or quotes which might be important to the performance; write a thesis statement, supporting statements, and a conclusion; and think about how these might become a part of the performance.
- Prepare a script. Brainstorm about general ideas and the ways they might be presented. If a group is performing, each member should describe different ways that the characters might interact. When writing the script, make sure it contains references to the historical evidence found in the research. Using actual dialogue, quotations, or excerpts from speeches are good ways of putting historical detail into the performance. Remember that the script should center on the thesis statement, supporting statements, and the conclusion.
- Be careful not to simply present oral reports on individuals which begin when they were born and end when they died. Instead, become the historical figure and write a script around an important time or place that will explain the major ideas.
- Prepare the set. Think about different types of sets which might help in depicting the topic. Is there a prop that is central to the story?
  Important. Don't get carried away with props. Content is the most important factor, and any props used should be directly related to the theme. Remember that performers have only five minutes to set up and take down their props.
- Prepare the costuming. Use the most authentic costumes possible. Good costumes help make a performer convincing, but be sure they are appropriate to the topic. Consult photographs or costume guides if unsure about appropriate dress.
- Prepare the blocking. To block a performance is to determine where the actors will stand, move, and/or relate to the set. Students should think about these movements when deciding what type of set to design.
- Practice, practice, practice! Work on the delivery, speaking clearly and pronouncing all words correctly. Practice voice projection so that the judges and the audience can hear every word. Practice with the set and full costumes as often as possible.